

Otter Harvest 2012-2013

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Abstract

Wisconsin trappers and citizens reported 1,445 otters during the 2012-13 season, including 1,044 taken with DNR issued permits, 105 taken off reservation by native trappers, 25 taken on reservations, and 271 turned in as incidentals, this includes road kills, but are primarily the result of beaver trapping efforts by citizen trappers or government agents. This was a decrease of 3% from the otter reported in 2011-12. The counties of highest harvest were Burnett (79), Polk (58), Price (54), Sawyer (49), and Marathon (46).

Background

Bluett (1985) described the procedures for obtaining otter tags, and registering/tagging otters in Wisconsin. Dhuey, et al. (2012) described the results of the 2011-12 otter trapping season. Otter harvest goals are set annually for each otter management zone based upon population size in relation to management goals. The number of harvest permits issued are based on the highest trapper success rate during the previous three years in each respective zone. Negotiated amounts of the harvest in each zone within the ceded territory are allotted to native American (Chippewa) trappers.

Methods

Non-Chippewa trappers are required to obtain an otter trapping permit before pursuing otter in Wisconsin. The application fee for an otter permit is \$3.00, (included in the Patron license fee). Trappers were required to register all harvested otters with the DNR.

The 2012-13 otter season ran from 3 November 2012 – 30 April 2013 in the Northern Zone and 3 November 2012 - 31 March 2013 in the Central and Southern Zones (Fig. 1). Trappers were required to register all otters with DNR personnel. The area of kill (county and deer management unit), date of kill, sex of the animal, type of trap used, type of animal (fur farm or wild), and the name and address of the trapper were recorded for each otter registered. Reported data were entered into the DNR production server by district personnel and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS). Otters trapped by native Americans on ceded lands were included in the harvest summary. Data on off-reservation treaty otter harvest was provided by the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (Jonathan Gilbert; pers. comm.).

Results

A total of 14,252 applicants (9,701 applied for a kill permit and 4,551 applied for a preference point) applied for the 3,335 otter tags issued in 2012-13 season (Table 1). The average number of tags per kill permit applicant was 0.23. There were 11% more applicants for permits and 22% fewer permits available than in 2011-12 season. In addition, a Chippewa allocation of 60 otters for the North Zone was agreed to for their use during the Chippewa off-reservation trapping season (1 November 2012 to 31 March 2013) on ceded lands, in the North Zone.

A total of 1,445 otters were registered by tribal and non-tribal trappers or reported as incidentals

during the 2012-13 season. This was a decrease of 2.8% from last year and the 17th highest total take since the state started registering otter in 1976. Permit success for the 2012-13 season (31%) was more than last year (25%). (Table 1.) Chippewa trappers took 105 otters on ceded lands; 47 more than were taken in the 2011-12 season (these data were provided by the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, P.O. Box 9, Odanah, WI, 54861). A total of 25 otter were registered with kill locations on Wisconsin's reservations. A total of 271 otters were registered as incidental, these were taken accidentally to other trapping activity, found dead, or road kills. All of these kill types are included in the statewide totals.

The average price paid for otter pelts by furbuyers was \$85.18 in 2012-13. This was more than the \$70.54 paid for otter pelts in 2011-12, and above the long-term average of \$44.27 and the most in the last 7 years (Table 2).

Burnett county had the highest number of otters harvested 79, Polk (58), Price (54), Sawyer (49), and Marathon (46) counties followed (Fig. 1). Deer management Unit 11 was the leading unit of harvest with 52 otters registered (Fig. 2).

More males (790; or 54.7%) were trapped than females (582; or 40.3%). Seventy-three (5.1%) registration forms did not report the sex of the otter or reported the sex as unknown.

Body-grip traps accounted for 77% of the otters harvested in 2012-13, and foothold traps accounted for 21% of the otter trapped. One percent of otters trapped were caught in water snares or a cage, 0.3% were unrecorded.

Nineteen percent of the otters registered this season were reported as being incidentally taken. These include otter taken while trapping for other species, found dead, or road kill. The regular beaver season ran concurrent with the otter season in each respective zone. The WDNR Furbearer Advisory Committee recommended a statewide harvest goal of 1,200 otter in the 2013-14 season, proportioned at one-third in each of the respective zones, north, central, and south.

Literature Cited

Bluett, R. 1985. The 1983-84 Otter Tagging Report. Wis. Dep. Nat. Resour. 7 pp.

Dhuey B., and J. Olson. 2012. Otter Harvest, 2011-12. IN: The Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys Report. August 2012. Document on file at the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, Bureau of Research, Madison, WI. 53711.

Table 1. 2012-13 Wisconsin state otter harvest goal and applicant results.

Zone	State Harvest Goal	Permits Issued	Applicants for Kill Tag	Applicants for Preference Point	Tags/Applicant	State Harvest*	Percent Success
North	360	1,165	4,238	NA	0.27	375	32.2%
Central	270	935	3,111	NA	0.30	356	38.1%
South	270	1,235	2,352	NA	0.53	309	25.0%
Unknown						4	
Total	900	3,335	9,701	4,551	0.34	1,044	31.3%

* Does not include incidental or tribal otter harvest.

Table 2. *The annual number of otter permits mailed to Wisconsin trappers, total registered otter harvest, and average pelt price, 1976-2013.*

Year	Number of Permits Mailed	Total Registered Harvest	Average Pelt Price (\$)
1976-77	5,050	1,271	
1977-78	5,218	1,113	47.83
1978-79	4,914	962	82.15
1979-80	5,754	1,448	60.05
1980-81	7,269	1,122	33.79
1981-82	8,256	1,024	26.89
1982-83	7,403	960	24.70
1983-84	8,294	995	25.68
1984-85	7,516	1,213	24.41
1985-86	7,104	960	22.84
1986-87	6,599	1,588	29.62
1987-88	9,360	1,724	23.87
1988-89	7,838	1,127	20.14
1989-90	6,360	1,213	24.11
1990-91	4,613	744	14.39
1991-92	2,799	762	12.50
1992-93	3,201	969	33.24
1993-94	5,531	1,130	57.30
1994-95	9,282	1,816	48.76
1995-96	14,800	1,517	44.47
1996-97	16,457	2,443	45.66
1997-98	15,429	2,704	43.70
1998-99	10,898	1,530	37.05
1999-2000	12,510	2,178	46.48
2000-01	11,180	1,844	54.01
2001-02	12,119	2,601	56.00
2002-03	8,370	2,053	77.12
2003-04	4,810	1,588	89.49
2004-05	4,240	1,322	78.03
2005-06	4,180	1,518	101.32
2006-07	4,335	1,458	44.28
2007-08	4,625	990	35.18
2008-09	2,410	710	33.04
2009-10	2,420	753	34.70
2010-11	3,770	913	46.05
2011-12	4,260	1,487	70.54
2012-13	3,335	1,445	85.18

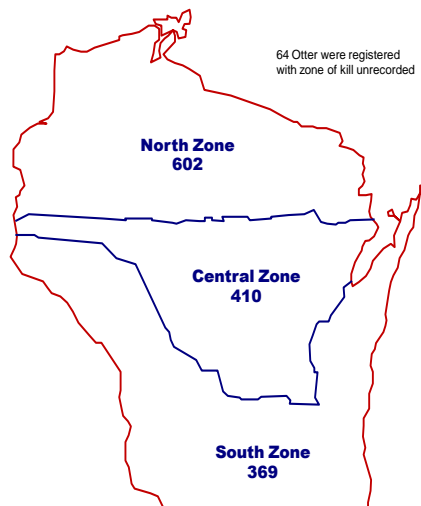


Figure 1. *2012-13 Otter kill by Zone.*

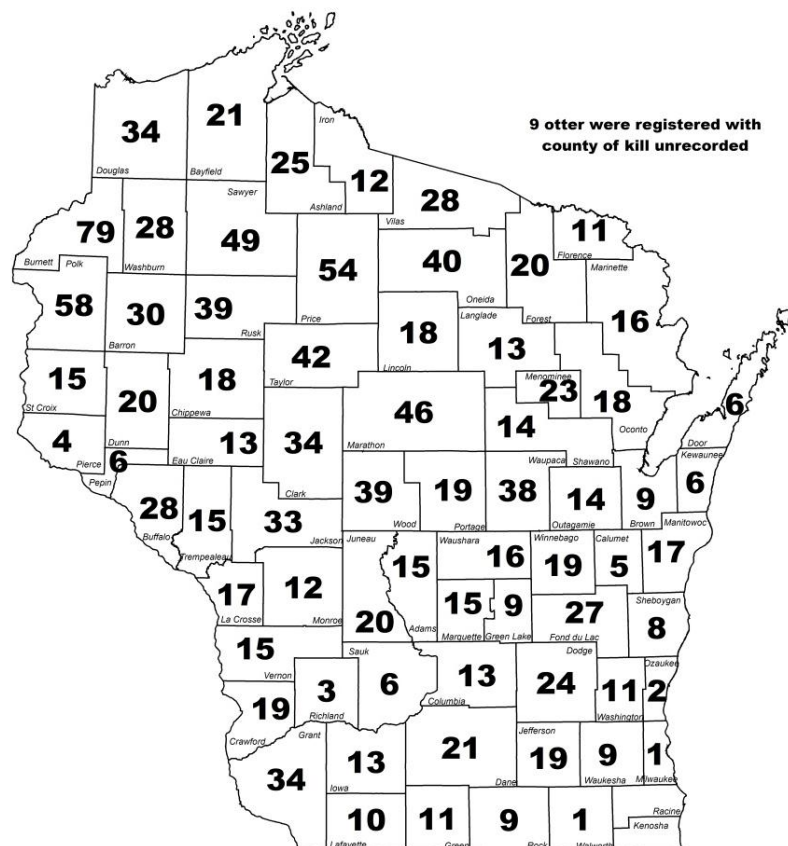


Figure 2. *The 2012-13 otter harvest by county.*

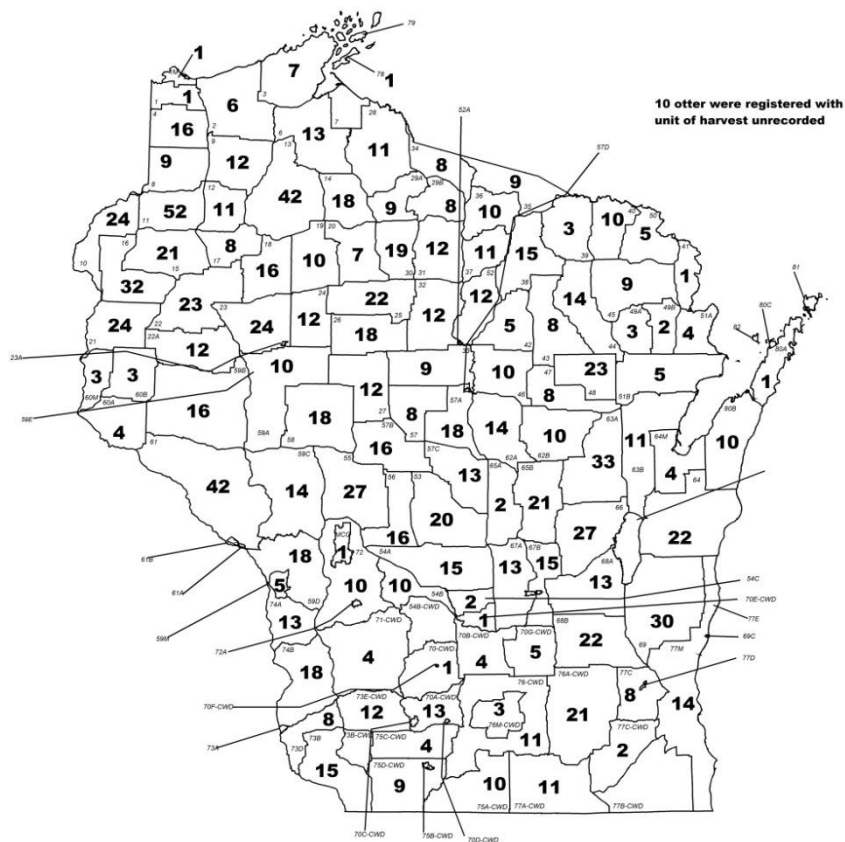


Figure 3. *The 2012-13 otter harvest by deer management unit.*